

college calender

FRESHMAN YEAR**fall**

- Buckle down early, since even your ninth-grade A's and D's will count in the eyes of college admissions counselors. Consider taking a study-skills and a time-management course, and then put what you've learned to use.
- Explore clubs and activities in and outside of school that will offer you the chance to develop your unique interests, abilities and leadership skills. Consider becoming a volunteer in your community. Too often, students wait until junior or senior year and then hurriedly-and unconvincingly-pad their resumés. Colleges want to see passion and commitment.
- Visit your guidance counselor early in the term to map out a four-year curriculum that will meet college entrance requirements and put you into the most challenging courses you can handle. If you expect to take Advanced Placement courses later, you may need to sign up for prerequisites now.
- Look into National Collegiate Athletic Association requirements if you think you may want to participate in sports in college. Consider whether your sports experience meets with your college plans—do schools that interest you need players in your sport? Research careers and talk to your parents about your interests and goals. Find opportunities to meet people working in fields that interest you.

summer

Those who are old enough to get a summer job may need to work and begin saving money for college. Those who are not old enough might take on volunteer work to gain leadership experience or enroll in an enrichment course or summer camp at a college. Read for pleasure—and while you're at it, learn the unfamiliar words. Vocabulary skills come in very handy on the SAT I.

SOPHOMORE YEAR**september**

- Draw up a list of college majors that intrigue you, and review your four-year course load with the majors in mind.
- Register for the PSAT or the practice ACT (or PLAN) if they are offered to sophomores at your school. These tests will prepare you for the SAT I and the ACT and can help you identify weaknesses in time to address them.

october and november

- Take the PLAN, which measures your academic development. Or take the PSAT to practice for the SAT I.
- College fairs are a great way to "see" many schools at once. Go to www.nacac.com/exhibit/fair.cfm, the Web site of the National Association for College Admission Counseling, to find the fairs nearest you. Check out www.nacac.com/exhibit/fair2.cfm to find performing and visual arts fair dates and locations. If you are unable to visit a college of interest, visit www.OnlineCollegeFair.com, which hosts online college fairs.

december

- Discuss your test results with your guidance counselor, and discuss how to make improvements where needed.
- Explore your reasons for going to college, which may have a huge bearing on where you belong. Try to take a career assessment, such as the Campbell Interest and Skill Survey, if you're struggling with a career choice.

april and may

- Talk to your guidance counselor and your parents about the wisdom of taking summer-school classes to improve your grades, to fit in a needed course, or to investigate a subject that appeals to you. Explore other constructive ways to spend your summer. There's nothing wrong with a good long stretch on the beach, unless that's all you do.

june

- Take the ACT or the June SAT II: Subject Tests, if appropriate. It's best to take the subject tests as soon as you complete biology or geometry, for example—even if that happens to be in ninth grade. Spend some time researching colleges.